

FAQ's for the SMK Campaigner Awards 2011

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What are the awards?

We believe that campaigning is an important part of a healthy democracy – but the right type of advice and support on how to tackle the challenges of trying to bring about change is not always available to everyone. The SMK Awards were created to help those fighting for social, economic and environmental change to develop their campaigning skills. Our awards programme offers bespoke training and development opportunities over six months to help you take your campaign to the next level. Whether you need advice on how to get media coverage, fresh ideas to boost your profile, or tips on how to influence politicians, a Sheila McKechnie Award can provide you with a support package to meet your needs.

We are particularly looking for people at the early stages of working on or running a campaign, who, with advice and support, could achieve much more.

Many campaigners are humble and are put off by the word 'awards'. An SMK Award is a development opportunity to fast track you to the next level of campaigning success, rather than an award that congratulates you on your past. If you win one of our awards, you receive a programme put together just for you, and the costs are covered by the award sponsor. There is no cost to you except for your commitment and time, which can be anywhere from 5-10 days over six months, depending on the programme we agree with you. An average time commitment is equivalent to about one day per month for six months.

What do you get?

The SMK Award support package runs over 6 months and normally runs from October to March. We work with you to develop a specific programme to suit your needs and your timing commitments. This can consist of:

- A Briefing day to introduce you to the programme
- An assessment of your campaign
- Coaching sessions with an expert in your field
- 2 x 1:1 Public Affairs training sessions
- 1:1 advice sessions and shadowing opportunities with senior decision makers
- A weekend residential with fellow programme participants

With the right advice and support, this programme fast-tracks campaigners to the next level and helps to develop your skills, knowledge and networks. Please note, that the Shout Out! and International Awards package varies slightly to provide specific support for these categories. Please see the application guidelines for these categories for further information.

Who is the programme for?

The programme is open to both paid campaigners from established organisations and those campaigning on a voluntary basis. The emphasis however is on under resourced and novice campaigners. We want to attract people working in a campaigning capacity right across the spectrum, including those who perhaps do not label themselves campaigners but are working to effect change in their community in some way.

The Awards support individuals who are relatively new to the field of campaigning or who have limited resources to be able to develop their skills. We do not support any given cause over another, but rather look for passionate, focused and visionary individuals. Your campaign can have a local, regional, national or international focus, but you must be based in the UK to be eligible.

We award individuals, not groups, although you are still eligible to apply if you campaign on behalf of a group or organisation. You can be a paid employee in a campaigning organisation, volunteer, Trustee, or be starting up a campaign on your own.

Are you eligible?

If you answer yes to the following questions then you are eligible to apply for a place on the programme, although please check the criteria for each award category:

- Are you a UK resident? (this doesn't apply to the International award)
- Do you work on a campaign based in the UK (but the focus can be global, national or local)?
- Have you been campaigning for less than 5 years? This will differ from person to person, but if you have been running campaigns full time for over 5 years then you may be too experienced. If you have been working on a voluntary or part-time basis your experience will be different too.
- You're over the age of 18 (except for Shout Out! and age 60 or over for Take Action).

- The Local Campaigner award is for England-based campaigners only.
- The London Social Justice award is for London-based campaigners only.
- If you're applying for the Shout Out! Award, you're aged between 14 and 18 and based in London.

- If you're applying for the Take Action Award, you're aged 60 or over.
- You're involved with a campaign that fits in with one of our categories (please contact us if you need help deciding which category you should apply under).
- If employed, you have permission from your employer to be released to participate in the support programme when required.
- You're campaigning on an issue that affects the wider community, not just one individual.
- You're not involved in a campaign that is offensive or discriminatory.

Within our charitable objectives, SMK makes awards to a range of organisations and individuals to conduct legal and effective campaigns. It is not necessary to be part of a registered charity to apply for an SMK award. However, awards can only support campaigns which further charitable objectives as defined in the 2006 Charity Act. There are 13 charitable purposes defined by the Act and they are quite broad. Full details are available on the Charity Commission (England and Wales) [website](#). If having read this information carefully you are still unsure if it is appropriate to apply, please ring us and a member of staff will be happy to discuss this with you. In these circumstances, please make sure you ring us well before the deadline for applications.

The charitable purposes defined by the 2006 Act are as follows:

- The prevention or relief of poverty.
- The advancement of education.
- The advancement of religion.
- The advancement of health or the saving of lives.
- The advancement of citizenship or community development.
- The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science.
- The advancement of amateur sports.
- The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity.
- The advancement of environmental protection or improvement.
- The relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.
- The advancement of animal welfare.
- The promotion of the efficiency of the armed forces of the crown, or of the police, fire and rescue services or ambulance services.
- Other purposes currently recognised as charitable and any new charitable purposes which are similar to another charitable purpose.

How do you apply?

You can apply by visiting the SMK Awards 2011 page and viewing the relevant category you wish to apply for. You can also visit the applications and guidance page by clicking [here](#).

What if you know of someone else you think should apply?

[\(click to go back to the top\)](#)

SMK has introduced a nominations process for its annual campaigner awards. If know of someone who is campaigning and would benefit from some additional support you will be able to nominate them for an SMK Campaigner Award. To nominate a campaigner, click [here](#)

Can I access information in Welsh?

Our awards are mostly UK based with exception of the International Campaigner, Local Campaigner London Social Justice, and Shout Out! awards. Materials will be available in both English and Welsh. Please [contact us](#) to receive the information in Welsh.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking for committed individuals who are campaigning for sustainable solutions to social, economic and/or environmental issues. We are particularly looking for people at the early stages of working on or running a campaign, who, with advice and support, could achieve much more. The application form is an opportunity for applicants to say who they are, what kind of change they want to bring about, why it is important to them, and how an SMK award will help them achieve their goals.

What kind of campaigns do we support and not support?

We support individuals working on campaigns that promote positive change and justice. We do not favour one campaign issue over another, but take into account the following factors:

- The context of the campaign – assessing the barriers and support for a campaign.
- Potential impact – assessing the longevity and the future impact that receiving additional resources and training would have on the campaign.
- Quality of future plans – what are your next steps?
- Existing resources – differentiating between campaigners attached to well established networks and those working alone.

We do not make awards to campaigns that are offensive or discriminatory.

When will you hear from us?

We aim to confirm the receipt of your application within 3 days by email if you supply an email address, or within 5 days by post if you do not have one. Applications will be shortlisted in early July and we aim to let you know whether you have been shortlisted for an interview within this period.

Do you get funding?

The Awards Programme does not provide financial grants.

What are the 2011 award categories?

There are 9 Award categories in 2011. This [table](#) provides a 'quick overview' of these awards and the main criteria for each one. For more criteria and information please look at the [award categories](#).

You will see from the variety of campaigns that previous SMK award winners have been involved in that each category covers a broad range of issues.

How many applications can you make?

You can only make one application a year. If you have applied in previous years you can still apply for future programmes so long as you still meet the criteria, and you have not previously been shortlisted for one of our awards.

People who have won an SMK Award cannot apply again.

How do we assess your application?

Once submitted your applications go through a detailed two-stage process. First, it is assessed by Foundation staff to make sure it is complete, you are eligible, and check it against the criteria set out above. Secondly, a shortlisting team use the information provided on the forms to create a shortlist of 3-4 applicants for the Judging Panels to interview in person or over the phone.

Why will we turn down an application?

Applications are turned down for a number of reasons. If you do not complete all the required sections, or answer the questions set out, then your application will be discounted. Our key criteria are laid out briefly above in the 'What are we looking for?' and in more detail in the guidelines for each award. It is worth checking that you have addressed these in your application form, as this is what we will use to determine the shortlisted candidates. Spending the time and making sure you prepare a strong application that gives a sense of who you are, what you want to do, and why you do it can really improve your chance of being shortlisted.

We will contact with you by the end of July if you have not been successful in being shortlisted. If you would like feedback on your application then this can be arranged through [Mustafa Korel](#).

All applications of a discriminatory or offensive nature will automatically be rejected.

What happens if your application is accepted?

If your application is shortlisted, you will be asked to come for an interview with a judging panel in July – or we will arrange for a telephone interview if you can't get to us easily. We aim to give you at least 7 days to prepare for the interview.

The judging panel for each category is different as is made up of a sponsor representative, an expert in the field i.e. a journalist or policy expert and a representative from SMK (usually senior staff or a Trustee). Interviews are approximately 45 minutes long and our aim is for it to be a relatively informal process.

Results of the interviews with shortlisted applicants will not be disclosed until the Awards ceremony which is usually held in September.

Complaints

If you feel you have not received a high level of service from SMK staff, please contact a member of the team to talk through your concerns in the first instance. If this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution then please contact the SMK Chief Executive.